

Acing the On-Site Interview

An on-site interview in an employer's office gives the opportunity for both the employer and candidate to thoroughly evaluate each other. The employer has an opportunity to make a more in-depth assessment of the candidate; the candidate has a chance to observe the work environment, interact with staff, and gain perspective about the organization's services and location.

Step 1: Accepting the Invitation

Acknowledge or decline an invitation to visit an employer in a timely manner. You should only accept an invitation if you are genuinely interested in the position and have not accepted another job offer. Be sure to have a voicemail message that is clear and professional, should you miss an expected call from an employer.

Confirm your plans with professors. Avoid conflicts with exams or project deadlines. Because interviews vary among organizations, ask for an interview schedule, including names of interviewers, when you agree to a site visit.

Step 2: Planning Your Trip

Confirm who is responsible for expenses and travel arrangements before accepting an invitation for an on-site interview. Some employers will reimburse for legitimate expenses associated with the interview, while some may not pay any expenses. Be sure to get directions well ahead of time. Plan for unforeseen delays, such as traffic, road construction, getting lost, etc.

Step 3: Interview Day Snapshot

Begin the morning by checking your email and voicemail to ensure no changes have been made to the time or location of the interview. An interview can range from one to eight hours. It may include multiple interviews, information sessions, tours, meals, and other activities. Most on-site visits incorporate some combination of one-on-one, behavior based, and group interview formats. Some employers may invite many candidates to visit at one time so they can observe interactions in a group or team setting.

You typically meet with many people and answer the same question more than once. Do not be surprised if you are asked questions you were already asked in a previous on-campus or phone interview. Remember to respond thoroughly and enthusiastically, as if it were your first time hearing the question.

Before leaving, find out the hiring timeline and when you should hear back. Collect business cards or at least the name and title, from everyone you meet. **Remember to send thank you notes!**